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AUTHOR	Latham, Patricia H.; Latham, Peter S.
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ABSTRACT

This publication provides an overview of attention deficit disorders (ADD) and the legal rights of college students with ADD. Possible accommodations that schools can make for students with ADD are provided and include: (1) provide structure and reduce distraction in class; (2) simplify and repeat instructions, as necessary, both orally and in writing; (3) give frequent and specific feedback from faculty and disability services staff; (4) provide accommodations such as priority registration, reduced course loads, taped textbooks, tape recorders, course modifications, tailored assignments, modified text books, priority seating in the front of the room, study guides, and summaries of important points; (5) provide test accommodations such as extra time, quiet room, alternative formats, and opportunities to seek clarification; (6) allow course substitutions to fulfill certain requirements, e.g., for foreign language and mathematics; (7) offer as electives alternative learning style courses; (8) educate the student regarding ADD, coping strategies, and advocacy techniques; (9) encourage the use of support groups, counselors and advisors to assist with academic, career and other issues; and (10) review rules and expectations and use behavioral management techniques as needed. Possible strategies for students with ADD are provided and a list of organizational resources is included. (CR)

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ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER

IN COLLEGE

FACULTY AND STUDENTS PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

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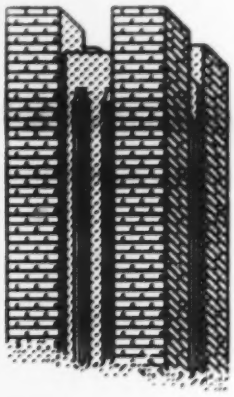

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NCLLD

National Center for Law and Learning Disabilities
P.O. Box 368
Cabin John, MD 20818
Telephone (301) 469-8308
FAX (301) 469-9466

By **Patricia H. Latham, J.D.**
Peter S. Latham, J.D.

with information and assistance from:

Kathleen G. Nadeau, Ph.D.
Patricia O. Quinn, M.D.
Mary MacDonald Richard
President - Elect CHADD

Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a neurologically based disorder that impacts upon learning and behavior. Specifically, the disorder may involve attention deficits, impulsivity, hyperactivity, mood swings, low stress tolerance and difficulty in following rules. It is a hidden disability which often impacts upon an individual's performance in the early school years, college and throughout life. ADD is not the result of poor parenting, inadequate teaching, laziness or emotional disturbance. It is frequently mislabeled, misdiagnosed and misunderstood.

ADD, once considered to be a disorder of childhood that is outgrown in the teen years, is now recognized as frequently extending into the college years and even being a lifelong disability for many people. In college there may be problems with organizing, prioritizing, completing tasks on time, doing lengthy assignments, performing tasks with many steps, writing papers, handling mathematics requirements, interacting with faculty and other students in an appropriate manner, meeting expectations and following rules.

Many students with ADD also have learning disabilities. A learning disability is a disorder of neurological origin that may impact upon input, output, and processing of information. In practical terms, learning disabilities may involve problems with reading, arithmetic, spelling, writing, speaking in an organized manner, sequencing, managing time and gross and fine motor coordination. An individual may have one or several learning disabilities.

There are many positive traits often seen in students with ADD: high energy level, intensity about interests, creativity and responsiveness to structure. Properly channeled, these qualities can lead to success in learning.

While ADD cannot be "cured", medication and other treatments are proving helpful. College students with ADD can be successful in the learning. College disability services staff, faculty, family and other social supports, combined with advocacy by the college student with ADD, are key elements in achieving success.

Legal Rights of the College Student with ADD

ADD which substantially limits a major life activity such as learning is a disability under two important federal statutes that apply to most colleges : the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (RA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Section 504 of the RA prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified students with ADD that substantially limits a major life activity such as learning. The RA applies to all colleges that receive federal funds: all public colleges and most private colleges. The RA requires that students with disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity be provided with academic adjustments and auxiliary aids so that the courses, examinations and activities will be accessible to them.

The ADA prohibits discrimination against otherwise qualified students with ADD that substantially limits a major life activity and requires that those students be provided with reasonable accommodations. The ADA applies generally to public and private colleges, regardless of whether or not they receive federal funds.

Many colleges are offering programs and/or support services for students with learning disabilities and ADD. Most require standardized admissions tests - SAT or ACT- but some waive these tests as an accommodation in the admissions process. Students with ADD and/or learning disabilities who

take standardized admissions tests may be eligible for test accommodations, e.g. extra time, breaks, alternative format. To establish eligibility, the disability must be documented in accordance with the requirements of the testing service.

Students with ADD may choose if and when to disclose their disabilities. If admissions and/or test accommodations are not needed, a student may elect to disclose the disability after admission Remember, if the college is not aware of the disability, the college would not be required to provide accommodations.

In disclosing disabilities and requesting College accommodations, the student should consult with professionals to determine what documentation to provide to the College. The particular accommodations that a student may need is an individual matter. Some students may have one or more learning disabilities in addition to ADD. The request for accommodations should take into account how the disabilities impact on the student's learning. If a student has questions about confidentiality of information regarding the disability, he or she may consult with independent professionals and/or college personnel.

Colleges must provide legally required services at no additional charge to a student with a disability. Generally, the college must provide services necessary to make courses, examinations and activities accessible to a student with a disability but is not required to provide remedial services to improve the skill level of the student in the area of his or her disability. For example, test accommodations and note takers would be provided free of charge to students in need of those accommodations. Colleges may charge supplemental fees for services that are over and above legal requirements. For example, a fee may be charged for the services of a remedial reading tutor.

There are various mechanisms to enforce these statutes. Complaints may be filed with the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Education. The ADA may be enforced by the Department of Justice as well as by private action.

Possible Accommodations by Colleges

In general, accommodations should provide the student with structure and reduced distractions, assistance with organizing and prioritizing, clear guidance as to expectations, and specific and repeated instructions, as needed. As with any disability, particular accommodations should be tailored to the needs of the individual to maximize success in learning. Possible specific accommodations are set forth below.

1. Provide structure and reduce distraction in class.

2. Simplify and repeat instructions, as needed, both orally and in writing.

3. Give frequent and specific feedback from faculty and disability services staff.

4. Accommodations in courses may include: priority registration, reduced course load, taped textbooks, tape recorders, course modifications, tailoring assignments, modified text books, priority seating in the front of the room, study guide and summary of important points.

5. Accommodations in examinations may include: extra time, quiet room, alternative format and opportunity to seek clarification.

6. Allow course substitutions to fulfill certain requirements, e.g. for foreign language and mathematics.

7. Offer as electives alternative learning style courses, e.g., history through film and internships to emphasize hands on learning.

8. Educate the student regarding ADD, coping strategies and advocacy techniques.

9. Encourage the use of support groups, counselors and advisors to assist with academic, career and other issues.

10. Review rules and expectations and use behavioral management techniques as needed.

Possible Strategies for Students

As with any disability, strategies should be tailored to the needs of each student to maximize success in college. Possible strategies are set forth below.

1. Continue to educate yourself regarding ADD, strategies, and accommodations that might be useful and legal rights and advocacy techniques.

2. Sit toward the front of the class to help you focus.

3. Use note takers or a tape recorder in classes.

4. Take time to get to know faculty and disability support staff and seek them out to request any assistance you need. Seek help as soon as you experience difficulties. Consider working with a counselor or advisor to help you learn coping strategies.

5. Keep a planner (assignment book or electronic scheduler) in which you record your assignments, due dates for papers and projects, your plans for completion, your personal deadlines for steps to completion, dates of quizzes, mid terms and finals exams, and your plans for study periods.

6. Pick a quiet and comfortable study place (e.g. your room, library or an available classroom), schedule study periods and take frequent breaks to get physical movement and refresh yourself.

7. Set aside 15 minutes at the end of your study time to review where you are on your various projects and to plan the next day.

8. Select courses that are high interest and a good fit for your learning style. Consider taking a reduced course load. If possible, request course substitutions to fulfill requirements that pose great difficulty for you because of your disability. If you must take a difficult course, consider taking it during the Summer or during a semester in which you have a light load.

9. Request needed accommodations in advance in courses, examinations and activities.

10. Ask questions if you do not understand an assignment or an exam question, and, if you remain unsure, you may note in writing your question and then proceed to complete the task to the best of your ability and understanding.

Resources

ORGANIZATIONS

1. AHEAD
   P.O. Box 21192
   Columbus, OH 43221
   (614) 488-4972

2. Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA)
   P.O. Box 972
   Mentor, OH, 44061
   (800) 487-2282

3. CH.A.D.D. (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder)
   499 Northwest 70th Avenue, Suite 308
   Plantation, FL 33317
   (305) 587-3700

4. Council for Learning Disabilities
   P.O. Box 40303
   Overland Park, KS 66204
   (913) 492-8755

5. Department of Education
   Office for Civil Rights
   330 C Street, SW
   Washington, DC 20202-2720
   (202) 205-9645

6. Department of Justice
   ADA Information
   (800) 514-0301

7. HEATH
   One Dupont Circle, NW
   Suite 800
   Washington, DC 20036
   (800) 544-3284

8. Learning Disabilities Association
   4156 Library Road
   Pittsburgh, PA 15234
   (412) 341-1515

9. National Center for Learning Disabilities
   381 Park Avenue S. #1420
   New York, NY 10016
   (212) 545-7510

10. National Information Center for Children and Youth With Disabilities
    P.O. Box 1492
    Washington, DC 20013
    (800) 695-0285

PUBLICATIONS

1. ADD AND THE COLLEGE STUDENT, edited by Patricia O. Quinn, M.D., New York : Brunner/ Mazel, 1994.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER AND LEARNING DISABILITIES: A LEGAL GUIDE, by Patricia H. Latham, J.D. and Peter S. Latham, J.D. , Washington, D.C.: NCLLD, 1994.

3. SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ADD OR LD, by Kathleen G. Nadeau, Ph.D., New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1994, 1994.

4. PETERSONS GUIDE TO COLLEGES WITH PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES, edited by Charles T. Mangrum, III & Stephen S. Strichart. Princeton, NJ: Petersons Guides, 1994.